

Historical Note on the Qanungo Family of Gulyana

Raizada Diwan Dunichand, the author of the Kaigoharnama belonged to the family of the hereditary qanungos or registrars of lands and revenue from the village Gulyana (Gujar Khan). He is probably the most famous of a long list of qanungos that were first employed by the Gakkhars and later by the Sikhs. While sifting through the folios of one of the earliest Kaigoharnama manuscripts, I have come across an interesting note scribbled by a later day owner that lists the names of 08 individuals who served as qanungos starting from 1668-69 during Gakkhar rule until the fall of the Sikh empire in 1848-49 [1]. The list of the names is reproduced here starting from the first individual to be appointed qanungo to the last: Baigraj, Dunichand, Gurbakhsh, Brijnath, Bodhamal, Raniar Singh, Nawab Singh, and Hashmat Rai. All names in the list are legible and readily identified except for the sixth i.e. Raniar Singh, which has been interpreted through cross referencing. In this list, Baigraj and Dunichand are father and son while Brijnath and Bodhamal are in turn sons of Dunichand [2-4].

Page | 1

Besides Raizada Dunichand, many other qanungos listed above were also accomplished men of letters. They wrote books on the history of Pothohar and its people, composed poetry in several languages, and added to the rich tradition of scholarly output initiated by Raizada Dunichand. It is pertinent to note here that another descendent of Raizada Dunichand named Ratanchand is also well known as an author and scribe. Ratanchand has recorded his father's name as Raizada Salamat Rai in various manuscripts [5]. Despite extensive search, I have not been able to trace his ancestry back to Raizada Dunichand. Raizada Ratanchand worked in the land revenue department of parganah Dangali but he was never appointed as a qanungo. He was a prolific scribe and did a remarkable job of preserving and transmitting the body of work of his forebears. As a historian, living and working during Sikh rule, he has chronicled the contemporary state of affairs in Pothohar and the Sikh empire at large [5].

Starting with Raizada Dunichand, many of these qanungos have frequently used the sobriquet 'Baal' or 'Bali' in their scholarly work. This sobriquet is probably a surname as it is being used by multiple individuals. Bali is a clan of the Mohyals, a Brahmin sub-caste [6]. It is likely that the qanungo family of Gulyana belonged to this community. The present historical note does not cover Dunichand's Kaigoharnama. For a detailed description of all known manuscripts of Kaigoharnama, the reader is referred to 'Historical Note on Extant Manuscripts of Kaigoharnama', ver. 1.2, dated 7th May, 2024.

Since 2023, I have been collecting and cataloging the extant manuscripts of the books written by other members of the qanungo family of Gulyana. So far, 14 manuscripts have been located

Sr. No.	Manuscript Title	Author/Year	Library or Collection	Catalog No.	Scribe/Year	Copy Acquired
1.	Tawarikh-i-Qaum Dhamialan [7]	Raizada Bodhamal/1758-59	Raja M. Asif Khan Collection (Village Akra Mohra, Sohawa)	Not Applicable	Unknown/Unknown	Extract Only
2.	Tarikh-i-Budhalan	Raizada Bodhamal/1761-62	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H51-7796 [8]	Raizada Ratanchand/1854-55	Yes
3.	Tawarikh-i-Kaharwalan	Raizada Bahadur Singh/ca. 1761-62	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H56-7801 [8]	Raizada Ratanchand/1853-54	Yes
4.	Bhakkarnama	Raizada Mehr Bakhsh/ca. 1765-66	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H51-7796 [8]	Raizada Ratanchand/1856-57	Yes
5.	Roopnama	Raizada Ratanchand/1840-41	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H118 [8]	Raizada Ratanchand*/Unknown	Yes
6.	Khalisnama [9]	Raizada Ratanchand/1843-44	Punjab University Library, Lahore	Pe III 73-2134 [10]	Raizada Ratanchand/1844-45	Yes
7.	Khalisnama	Raizada Ratanchand/1843-44	Punjabi University Library, Patiala	332086/GS [11]	Unknown/Unknown	No
8.	Kursinama Gojjaran	Raizada Ratanchand/Unknown	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H118 [8]	Raizada Ratanchand*/Unknown	Yes
9.	Tawarikh-i-Dhanialan	Raizada Ratanchand*/Unknown	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H56-7801 [8]	Raizada Ratanchand/1860-61	Yes
10.	Tawarikh-i-Dhanialan	Raizada Ratanchand*/Unknown	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H57-7802 [8]	Unknown/Unknown	Yes
11.	Kaifiyat-i-Bunyad Mouza Gulyana [4]	Unknown/Unknown	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H108-7852 [8]	Raizada Ratanchand*/ca. 1836-37	Yes
12.	Mukhtasar Ahwal Qaum Budhal [4]	Unknown/Unknown	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H108-7852 [8]	Raizada Ratanchand*/ca. 1836-37	Yes
13.	Intikhab-i-Tawarikh-i-Hindostan	Raizada Ratanchand*/Unknown	Punjab University Library, Lahore	H56-7801 [8]	Raizada Ratanchand/1860-61	Yes
14.	Bal Nama [6]	Raizada Ratanchand/Unknown	Not Available	Not Available	Unknown/Unknown	No

* Plausible author or scribe.

and 12 books with distinct titles have been identified. In at least two instances, more than one copy of the same title also exists. There is additional material present inside the collected volumes of many of the extant manuscripts that has not been categorized as books but nonetheless carries significant literary and research value. Out of the 14 extant manuscripts located thus far, complete digital copies of 11 while partial digital copy of 01 manuscript has been acquired. The bibliographical data of all manuscripts that have come to light up to now has been presented in the preceding table.

A book titled 'Wajah-i-Tasmia Dehat-i-Pothohar' believed to be written in 1762-63 has been attributed to Raizada Brijnath. An Urdu translation of the contents of this book is available however in the absence of the original manuscript, the authenticity of the text remains uncertain [12].

The scholarly merit of the literary and historical works of the qanungo family of Gulyana has been long recognized. It is interesting to note here that in 2023, a doctorate has been awarded for a dissertation based on Ratanchand's Khalisnama (serial no. 6 in the preceding table) by the Punjab University, Lahore [13]. This is the first time that a doctorate has been awarded for a scholarly work by any member of the qanungo family of Gulyana.

References

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